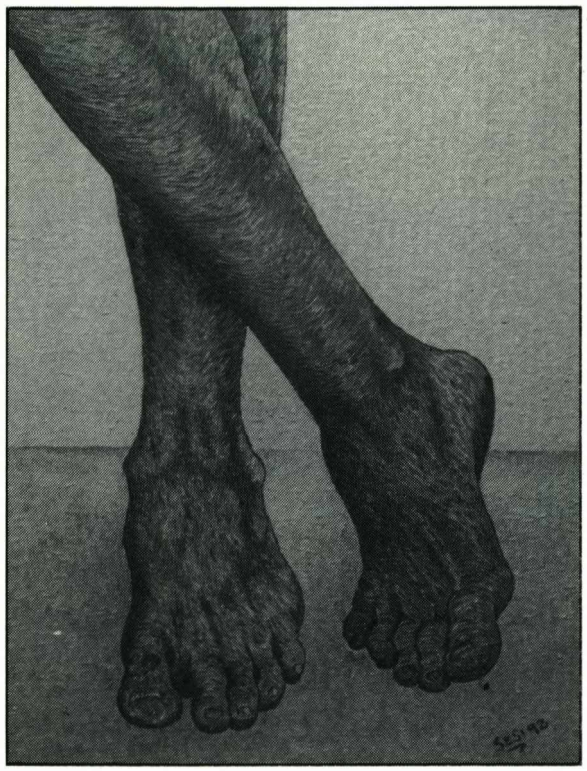


Sebastião is part of a generation of Timorese that really have no choice but to stand up to raise the voices of his people in the outside world.

His generation know only too well that if they don't do it, no one else will do it for them! Hence,

## "Cultural Survival: Through the Eyes of an Artist..."

ETRA INC

EAST TIMOR RELIEF ASSN. INC.

This exhibition is sponsored by
East Timor Relief Association Inc.

P.O. Box 23 Fairfield, NSW 2165
Phone (02)891 5861 Fax (02)891 2876

TL 1513

# EAST TIMOR

THEME: CULTURAL SURVIVAL

## 8-23 OCTOBER 1993

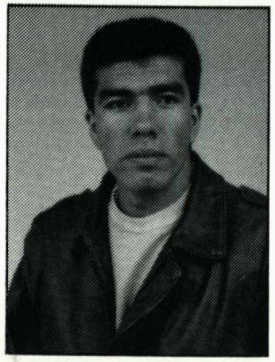
61-63 Sussex Street
Sydney 2000
Tom Nelson Hall

11am - 5pm (Monday-Friday)
1pm - 5pm (Saturday & Sunday)

ETRA INC

# CULTURAL SURVIVAL

## Through the Eyes of an Artist...



**Sebastião Silva**

"Survival of a Culture: Through the Eyes of an Artist" is an exhibition of paintings by Sebastião Silva, a Timorese who escaped who escaped to Portugal in 1984 and migrated to Australia a year later.

In his paintings, the peaceful life prior to the indonesian invasion and the consequent occupation of East Timor is portrayed vividly in contrast with the uncertainties of the life under the Indonesian occupation.

But, unlike the beautiful arts and crafts where colourful materials like "tais" is produced through weaving from the inks of plants like taun (blue), the bark from samtuk plant (red), the roots of the henuk (yellow) and the seeds of the meku (purple), painting on canvas was not a Timorese tradition. Only in recent years we witness the emergence of quite a few Timorese talented artists. Their creativity and skills are solely a product of their dedication and determination - not from attending any art school.

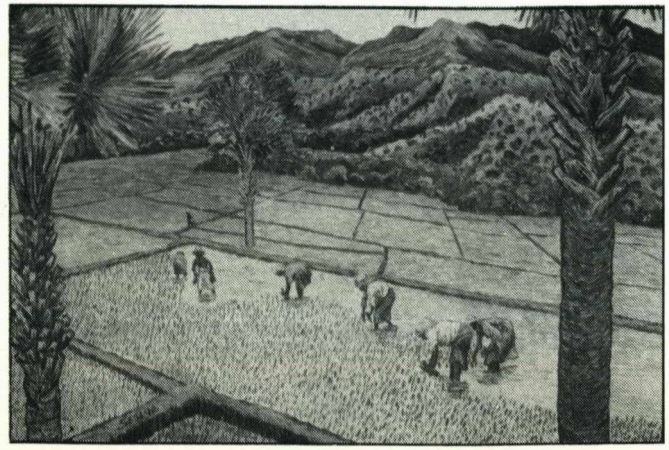
Sebastião Silva ("SESI" on his paintings), 30 years of age, was born in Dili. He comes from a large family of farmers. He grew up working in the rice fields, helping his father from an early age.

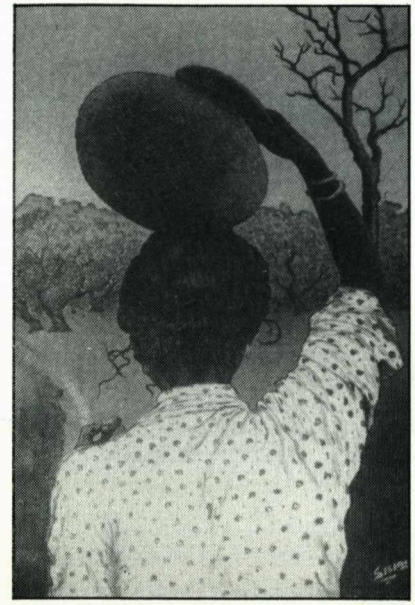
After the invasion he attended the Externato S. Jose in Dili, a school run by Missionaries but, due to the activities of the students, it became known as the heart of the Resistance in the capital.

It was in this environment that Sebastião began painting which mostly depicted peasants and their anguish lived day by day.

Those paintings could only be seen within the walls of his school, because it reflects the feeling of the people against the invaders.

Since he left East Timor it was only in 1990 he decided to restart with long dreamed career, believing that through his work he can help raise the awareness of the outside world to bring peace for his people sooner, rather than later. He first exhibited in Portugal in 1992, with the support of Borja da Costa's Foundation, under the theme "Pintura de Timor".





Early this year, another collection called "Art with Timor" was also promoted successfully in Darwin, Northern Territory.

Sebastião's favourite artists are Van Gogh and Camilo Pissarro. Like Van Gogh, Sebastião concentrates his paintings on peasants and rural scenes - like the way he grew up and memories of a past traumatic life he wont forget.

The aim is to share his experience with the people who supports the Timorese in their conquest for freedom but know little about the essence of this Resistance: the Culture.